

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

Fourth Series

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 290.

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1869

PRICE 1½d.

MOSCO'S AUTOMATON.

I HAVE got a hard and heavy head ; it's like wood. I don't think I ever think ; and don't know as I ever did, except about nothing ; and I often set doing that for hours at a time.

'You blockhead !' father he ses to me (which is a shipwright), 'you're only fit to cut up into a figure-head, you great, hungry, hulking, wooden-headed lubber you !'—for he had put me to lots of trades, and it was no use ; everybody said I had no head-piece—no, not for going errands, nor giving away handbills even. It's no good dunning things into my head, for the only thing I ever could remember is meal-times. Nothing I eat hurts me, and nothing don't seem to do me any good. Nothing makes me laugh nor puts me out of temper. The only thing ever I see makes me feel like laughing is meals, and then I've got something better to do ; and the only thing makes me feel like getting out of temper is getting out of bed of mornings to chop wood ; but when you are out of bed, you may as well chop wood as do anything else, for aught I know. The snail gets to his bed as quick as the swallow, and don't get near so tired.

Well, there was a conjurer chap came into our town—a brisk lively sort of chap that could talk like a pump, in a regular stream. He see me loafing about, and give me an order to see his show, providing I would go up on the platform to hold some things for him. I went up, and did what he told me. It seemed to amuse the people very much, for they laughed themselves nearly into fits, and said : 'Did ever you see a man keep his countenance like him?' and, 'It's just as if he was cut out of wood.' Now, unless a man sees something to laugh at, he has got no call to laugh—and that's why I didn't.

After it was over, the conjurer chap come to me, and ses : 'I never see your living equal. You must be used to the public, not to mind them any more than as if you was a stone idol !'

'I never see the public before,' I ses.

'You didn't?' ses he.

'No,' I ses.

'Well, look here,' he goes on, 'I don't mind standing you half-a-crown if you'll tell me what you was a-thinking of when the public was screaming with laughing at you.'

'Victuals,' I makes answer.

'Come and have some along with me,' he replies, 'for I think I can put you in the way of getting them regular.'

So I did.

Next day, he goes to see my father.

'Your son has a wonderful talent, sir.'

'Hang his talent,' ses my father : 'it's a pity he can't use it on any other tool than a knife and fork !'

'A natural gift, sir, for not laughing at anything, such as I never see before out of the reserved seats. The question is, could he be depended upon always to keep his countenance as he did last night ?'

'I never see him smile in my life,' father makes reply, 'nor get angered, nor put out ; in fact, I never see him take notice of anything. There's no mistake he can keep his countenance, which is a good deal more than his countenance'll ever do for him.'

'I don't know so much about that,' the conjurer ses, 'for I'm open to give him two pound a week and his board, if he'll sign articles with me for twelve months.'

'And what is he to do?' ses my father.

'Nothing—except to be looked at, and that won't hurt him, I suppose !'

'Well,' father ses to me, 'is it a bargain ?'

'I don't care,' I ses. So I joined the show.

The public is an obstinate lot, for when you laugh, they won't ; but if you set your face against laughing, or if you've got no call to laugh, through not seeing anything to laugh at, they will laugh like mad—leastways, so I've found it.

Signor Mosco was the conjurer's name, or, at anyrate, the one he went by in public. He was called a pretty good hand, but I couldn't see much in what he did. I knew where the bullets went to when he made-believe to ram them into a pistol with a barrel like an ear-trumpet. I stuffed the

gold watches in the half-quartern loaves, and ironed out the ladies' and gentlemen's pocket-handkerchiefs, while he was pretending to burn them. It's surprising what little things amuse the public. I used to tell 'em so, when Signor Mosco had done one of his best tricks, but they only grinned, and said: 'Lord, how he does keep his countenance!' and, 'What a nerve he must have, to be sure!' There was the hat-trick. The tins, and the feathers, and things look a good deal when they are all thrown about, but they took up no room scarcely when I'd put 'em together, ready for use. And as to rolling two rabbits into one, what was there to surprise *me*, knowing all along very well what was become of the second rabbit, when I shouldn't have took on very much even if he *had* rolled 'em into one, except it was at dinner-time. There was the decapitated head and the basket-trick, and the magic flowers, and the woman setting on nothing, which was called Mecca. Well, I see the looking-glasses and the false bottoms, let alone the legs of the decapitated head; and, consequently, I couldn't see anything in any of it.

There was only one part of the entire performance that ever I *could* see anything in, and that was, as the bills put it: 'The Marvellous Mechanical Man or Wooden Automaton, on whose construction no less than twenty-five years have been expended, to bring it to its present perfection as the greatest wonder of the age.'

I will tell you about it.

First of all, there was a large box, or pedestal, for the figure to stand on, and containing the works, which was carried off the stage, and into the centre of the reserved seats. It had a winch, to turn with a handle like a bed-post key, to wind up the man, and when wound up made a noise like an engine getting up steam, which was the works running down. Then the man was brought down off the stage, carried upright by four strong fellows. His feet were fastened to a round wooden stand, like children's soldiers stand on, in which was a worm for the great screw on the top of the pedestal. When brought down, he was hoisted up on the pedestal, and turned round and round until screwed on. There were a great many tubes, and wires, and levers connecting the figure with the box, and sticking out round it, which looked very curious, and, besides, shewed the working parts. But a worse finished man no one ever see at a tobacconist's shop-door, which made it the more singular his doing what he did. About his neck and the back of his head the paint was wore off, shewing the bare wood; and the same with the point of his nose, which was splintered; and likewise his hands, which were glued and cracked. Signor Mosco used to explain this had occurred in packing, and that he would repair the injuries. But it seemed as if it always did occur in packing, for the injuries never were repaired. Then, as to his complexion, it would have been a disgrace to any house-painter. It was red and whitewash, varnished, and done so badly, that it looked as if you could see the grain of the wood through the paint. I've often asked Signor Mosco why he didn't paint his automaton better, but he only grinned, and said: 'How precious green you are, ain't you?'

Everybody who see the man used to say: 'How stupid of Signor Mosco, after making such a clever figure, not to have spent a pound or two in finishing

it properly, instead of leaving it such a clumsy wooden scarecrow.'

The newspapers, too, used to speak most disrespectful of the man; like this which I've cut out:

'Signor Mosco revisited our town with his interesting exhibition last week. His remarkably skilful feats of pretidigitation were the admiration of large and fashionable audiences. To the other attractions of his entertainment, the professor of the quick-fingered art has now added what he is pleased to term The Marvellous Mechanical Man. The performances of this automaton are particularly clever, but it belies its name. It might with more correctness be termed a figure, for it is so roughly constructed as to bear no more resemblance to humanity than the effigies which are carried through our streets on the 5th November. We cannot help thinking that if Signor Mosco would devote a little more pains to the finish of his wooden effigy, and to concealing some of the cords and levers by which the life-like motions are too obviously conveyed to the limbs, the illusion would be rendered more complete.'

So far from being angry at reading such notices, Signor Mosco always used to chuckle and slap me on the back, and want to know why I didn't laugh too. I see, very naturally: 'Because I don't see anything to laugh at.' 'Well,' says he, 'you *are* a cure, you are, and the biggest I ever see.'

But that figure only got worse, and more shabby and rickety, the more that was said about it, until at last, whenever the men used to carry the automaton to his pedestal, one of its arms would drop off. The professor always said it was an unforeseen accident, and apologised for it. But it was an unforeseen accident that used regularly to occur every evening, and get apologised for. And what was another singular thing, the worse the figure was, and the more rickety he got, the more clever people thought his performance was.

Well, when the Mechanical Man was screwed down on the pedestal for his performance, Signor Mosco would commence with a short lecture on the powers of the lever, the screw, and the pulley, and the spiral spring. He would then go and wind up the machine, with the handle like a bed-wrench. It made a great clatter, and took a long while to wind, owing to the power of the spring. When he had done, the whole concern began to go 'Cr-r-r-r-r,' and kept on going so all the time, whilst the people could see the works going round through one side of the pedestal, which was of glass. The professor would then strike sharply with his wand, and pull a cord that worked the levers of the automaton's head. 'Wake, Francisco!' see he; and Francisco, which was the wooden figure, begins to move his head, very slow, first from right to left, then from left to right. Then Signor Mosco pulls another string, and Francisco opens his eyes, very gradually, or quick, according as the string is pulled. Then it would be: 'Raise the right arm, and salute the company;' which the figure would do, rather stiff and jerky, but still he did it. That stiffness and jerkiness of the movements (and they were all like that) was what people seemed disposed to grumble at. 'We want to see 'em a little more airy and graceful,' the public see. 'Ladies and gentlemen, see the Signor, 'what can you expect from machinery?'—which was very true. 'But to

shew you the command I have over the automaton when at a distance from it, I will now return to the stage, after simply pressing a spring in the figure's back, and, sitting before the index-board connected with the figure, I will enable you to put its abilities to the test.' He sat at a small table in front of the stage, where there was a board like a draught-board, but covered all over with knobs. People were then to question the automaton. The figure did numbers and counting, by slowly jerking up its right hand as many times as was wanted. 'Yes' and 'No' he did with his head, by bending it for 'Yes,' and shaking it for 'No,' and this way he would tell fortunes and ages quite equal to a learned pig or an educated pony. Indeed, there was no end to the questions he could answer, and they were very often right, which was a wonder for machinery. Francisco used to finish up by whirling his arms round like the wooden sailors do on weather-cocks, and he would keep on till the professor touched a button and stopped the works, when his arms would remain sticking straight up, until a string was pulled to let them down, and even then they would still keep on swinging backwards and forwards for a bit. There were some people wanted the automaton to do more, but the Signor said it couldn't be done, not by machinery.

In due time, as we went round the provinces, we come back again to the town where my father lived. I was against going there at all. I told Signor Mosco so; and I didn't want him to shew the Mechanical Man there, as I told him they weren't good judges of machinery in that place. But he wouldn't listen, and so the automaton was done there the first night. We had got about half-way through his performance, and the professor had gone on to the stage, whilst Francisco was answering questions. There is mostly a crowd of people round the figure at such times, but to-night there was a wiry old man pressing his way close up to the wooden effigy, and looking into its eyes.

'Now, sir, will you keep your hands off that figure, if you please—do you hear me?' Signor Mosco sea.

'Mother!' the old man bawls out to his wife, taking no notice—only laughing fit to split—'mother! come here, I tell ye—I'm blowed if they haven't been and made a figure-head of our Bill!'

I couldn't see anything to laugh at, for it was two pound a week and victuals out of my pocket, let alone the exposure.

THE LOWER RAILWAY WORLD.

OF late years, the railway system has been sufficiently before our eyes, and its magnates are as household words; while many writers have, more or less vividly, depicted the driver or guard—but who is to tell of the cleaner or the labourer? No one, it seems; as the most popular sketch ever made of a driver coolly speaks of him as cleaning his engine immediately after his trip, a solecism which shocks all railway people, and asserts as a fact that which—were it possible to clean a hot engine—the driver would rather die than do.

Cleaners, be it understood, are not labourers, nor are labourers cleaners. On all railways, there are employed, in excess of almost every other working class—excepting at the great factory stations where

the engines are made and repaired—a body of men and boys, whose duties are, exclusively to clean the engines, and prepare them for their trips. These duties rise from mere washing and rubbing to some of considerable importance. At the present day, when the organisation of each railway staff has grown complete, care is exercised in the selection of these youths; but some years ago, it was not so; any one was supposed to be fitted for a cleaner; and it was not uncommon to see men considerably advanced in years working by the side of young blue-eyed boys, and at much the same wages; while as for characters!—well, good behaviour in their duties could gain them one, but the majority did not bring such things with them. This is all changed now; and a recommendation is now as essential to obtain for a candidate the unsavoury post of cleaner, as for the more immediately eligible appointment of porter. The reader least conversant with railway matters will hardly need to be told that no translation from one department to another exists, and that cleaners are not taken to become porters, or *vice versa*. Cleaners generally commence, if they join as boys, at one shilling per day, and rise by slow steps to half-a-crown per day, at which they stop, unless they are appointed 'lighters-up' or 'tubemen,' when they receive a little more. The lighter-up is the most advanced cleaner, and his duties are somewhat onerous; the working of the trains is arranged by a rota of engines, which the lighter-up has to study; it is his duty to see that, during the night, the engines, as they arrive from their trips, are placed in order as they will be wanted, and that steam is got up in them in regular succession.

Occasionally, an engine will blow up; and as this usually takes place in or about the shed, the lighters-up or cleaners are commonly the sufferers. Without dwelling on the enormous power of steam, I may mention here that some of these explosions have been attended with the most singular effects. I have seen the clothes of a cleaner which had been blown from his back—I cannot explain how—but blown they certainly were by the bursting of an engine; and his smock-frock or 'slop,' as railway men call it, hung on the buffer of an adjoining locomotive, as neatly as though the unfortunate owner had hung it there himself. He, poor fellow, had lost his head, which, quite severed from his body, ran for many yards along the bricked floor of the shed. There is, or was recently, in one of the largest engine-sheds in England, one of a pair of braces which were blown off the wearer's shoulders, and lodged on the beams in the lofty roof: there it hung for a long time, and there, possibly, it hangs now. The poor fellow was killed—scalded to death: he did not die at the moment; but when my informants went to pick him up, he was almost naked, and the sheets of flesh came off in their hands 'like pancakes,' as they described it.

In spite of the rough lot the cleaners are of, their low pay, and very harsh discipline, strangers of a much higher grade than would be expected are often found offering themselves to join them. These are generally youngsters who have an

enthusiastic fondness for engines and machinery in general, and who hope to get into the engineering world by this humble channel—some such irresistible longing, doubtless, as that which makes boys with good homes want to go to sea. I have known young gentlemen of excellent position and good acquirements offer themselves as cleaners; but I never knew one who persevered after he had seen his future comrades fairly at work.

Foreigners occasionally will come, with introductions from some one who is probably pestered by their applications, and so adopts this as the surest mode of getting rid of them. They never join. Poor fellows, they would have a sorry time of it on our railways. This reminds me that I have never seen any notice taken of the very curious fact that Irishmen do not take to railway-work. On one of the very largest railways in England, I do not think there is at this moment an Irish driver or fireman; and for many years, at its chief working-station, there was scarcely a solitary one among the mechanics, labourers, or cleaners. A few tried it, but though they were very steady fellows indeed, they did not remain. As Irishmen are always first where sheer hard work is to be done, I wonder how it is they do not take to this kind of railway labour. Perhaps it is not always their fault.

The fascination which engines and their human satellites exercise over some minds is very great; and while speaking on the subject, I am reminded of a young man who haunted for years one of our chief termini: he was the son of a leading west-end confectioner, so that his early training had in no way disposed him to an engineering life; but he was the most remarkable accumulation of statistics in connection therewith I ever knew. The line employed several hundreds of engines, and he not only knew the names of all of them, but when they were made, and who had made them; when each one had last been supplied with a new set of tubes at the factory—this last, of course, only referred to the engines employed on the main line, which he had an opportunity of seeing, and would miss when they were laid up for repair—and how this had had the pressure on its safety-valve increased, and this had been diminished. He had such a retentive memory for these and kindred facts, that I have seen the foreman of the works appeal to him for information, which was never lacking. His penchant was so well known, that he had special permission for access to the works.

'Firebox boys' are rudimentary cleaners, and an unpleasant time they have of it; they hope, however, to have 'side-work' in time. 'Wheels' are not popular among cleaners, being always dirty work, with no show when finished; but all gradations must be gone through before the cleaner can be a tubeman—next in honour to the lighter-up. The tubemen alluded to are those whose duty it is to see that every tube is clear before the engine is got ready for its trip. This is done by thrusting a long rod through each one, and is very tiresome work, as chinkers will often get into the holes. The importance of this must be obvious, as, without complete draught, there could be no such fire as would serve an engine.

Among so motley a collection as the cleaners were, sharp discipline was of course necessary, but this was sometimes abused; and I have known a

contractor dismiss a man on the spot, who, on a bitterly cold and wet day, warmed his hands for a few moments at the furnace. Such harshness as this would not probably be exercised where the men were engaged by the company; but where a contractor had the work in his hands, he would grudge every moment that was taken from labour. This system, however—that of contracts—is not nearly so prevalent in the railway world as it was of yore.

When railways were new, the vast majority of the drivers and firemen were north-countrymen, and for a long time this element prevailed; but from the gradual growing up of cleaners who come to be firemen, and then drivers, the proportion of northern men gets smaller every day, the cleaners always coming from the districts through which the railway runs. No man is now allowed to pass as fireman until he can sign his name to the rules; and it is very much to the credit of the cleaners that they will often attend night-schools, to glean what bit of learning they can, and to enable them to make the desired signature. This rule is in direct opposition to the opinion of the late Mr Brunel, who held that reading and writing helped to unfit a man for engine-driving; that an animal trained to drive his engine, and whose mind was not cultivated enough to enable him to think about anything else, made the best and safest servant.

Labourers are those who assist fitters; those who assist smiths are called strikers, and are a grade above the others; they sometimes go out as firemen, but are not supposed to be, as a rule, so good as the cleaners. Of a batch of six labourers who were 'made' at one time on a certain line, five were killed, injured, or were unable to stand the work. This last cause thins the ranks terribly. From the continual exposure to wet and cold, especially when we remember that the men are always standing on a warm plate of iron, the trial of the first year of a fireman's life is excessively severe.

Injuries are very frequent among the labourers, as they are so much among and under the engines and trucks. In most sheds, a small glass case is fastened in a conspicuous place against the wall—such a case as we see stuffed birds in—and this contains a tourniquet or bandage for stopping the bleeding from an artery. There is no lock to the case; but, when wanted, the glass is broken, and the tourniquet taken out. A stretcher, too, is always at hand, and not seldom, unfortunately, used. From the immense weight of the vehicles handled, very slight pushes, as they seem, are fatal; and I have seen a young man killed, deluged, indeed, with blood from his head, by the apparently leisurely rolling together of two trucks; while another man, whom you would have thought had scarcely been touched, was squeezed so dreadfully in the waist as to force up instantly the food he had swallowed an hour before, and was then carried off, to linger best part of a year in the hospital. My readers would scarcely care for a catalogue of accidents; yet I cannot forbear mentioning one, as a case in point. A cleaner was at work on an engine in steam, just giving a last touch to the framing, when the locomotive moved—pushed on, doubtless, by another engine striking it behind. To the eye, the movement was scarcely perceptible; but the top and sole leather of the man's boot came

together, the toes within being crushed to nothing, we may say. The poor fellow died.

One can easily suppose that the work of a labourer is heavy and dirty. He has to carry the various detached portions of the machinery from the shed to the shops, when required for repairing, and back again; the fitter gravely and majestically preceding him, the majority of mechanics thinking it much beneath them to assist in the carriage of material. But such duties are not hard in themselves. The most disagreeable part of the labourer's work is getting an engine on the line. When a locomotive runs off the rails, although no serious accident may ensue, it blocks at least one line, and must be replaced as quickly as possible. This, of course, has to be done in the open air, and without the usual appliances for lifting an engine. It has to be lifted up by screw-jacks, and gradually turned in the direction of the rails; and in some loose soils the tremendous weight of the engine presses the screw-jack into the earth, instead of the latter lifting the engine. In this case, they have to accumulate blocks of timber under the jack until the maximum of pressure is overmatched, and no longer acts; as much as six feet below the surface having been reached in an extreme case. The labourer's pay, I ought to have said, is somewhat better than that of the cleaner, as he is always supposed to be a grown man; and he usually starts at half-a-crown a day—not, however, an excessive rate for the London district—and he gets no increase or promotion beyond two or three pence, unless taken as fireman.

As every one must know, the greatest offence either of these classes can commit, or indeed any other railway servant, is to come to their work intoxicated. This is always severely and yet justly dealt with; in fact, there is seldom any other penalty for this offence than dismissal.

A COUNTY FAMILY.

CHAPTER XXIII.—LUCY'S OPINION IS CONSULTED.

ELLEN BLACKBURN had not exaggerated the case when she said that in her her grandfather now found his only comfort. His face was never seen to smile unless she was looking up at it. He had no consciousness (as Mr Waller had with regard to Lucy) that in favouring Mr Stanhope's suit he was urging her to run a great hazard. He knew no more of that gentleman's pecuniary affairs than that he had not an income sufficient to live at Curlew Hall in a manner suitable to his station, while of his character and disposition he thought very highly, and in many respects no less than they deserved. He scarcely deemed that he was asking of Ellen any sacrifice of feeling. He had almost forgotten the existence of John Denton altogether, and that other and intermediate state of life in which he had met with him was fading fast from his remembrance. The state of affairs of half a century ago seemed in the old man's mind to join with the present almost without a break. He had been always the Squire, and the heir of Redcombe Manor, but for a certain interval, which waned and waned in his waning mind until it was almost imperceptible. But there was one occurrence during that interregnum which he did not

forget, and, indeed, of which he would in any case have been put in daily remembrance by the misconduct of the original offender—namely, the crime and punishment of his only son.

So long as any record of them had existed, the Blackburns had almost all been a dissolute and vicious race; but, however they might have sinned against the Gospel, they had none of them broken the Laws. They had had no temptation to do so. Old Anthony did not understand that want of principle in a rich man is almost certain, in a very poor one, to shew itself in crime. True, he himself had not much principle (in any high sense at least), and yet he had lain long years among the pots of Poverty, and come out unsoiled at last. But then he had a substitute for principle in his indomitable pride. Nine-tenths of the Blackburns before him had had something of this pride (though very few of them any real self-respect), but in him it had taken root and flourished prodigiously. He had sat under it, as under his own fig-tree, throughout his exile, and it had served him in good stead in many a wind of bitterness; and though his son William (savage as he was) had hewed its branches and hacked its trunk, it still lived after a fashion, and ever and anon put forth a bud or two. It had borne the shock of William's return, and had been propped up and even drawn some strength and vigour from the thought that Herbert Stanhope would marry Ellen, and their children's children perpetuate the good Blackburn blood, if not the name; but now there was a canker at its very core. 'The old Squire is breaking up at last,' was become a common saying about Redcombe. Those who looked deeper thought there was no physical cause, but attributed the alteration in him to the shock he had received from his son's recent illness, the nature of which was by this time as well known for ten miles round the Manor as the shape of the Redcombe weathercock. It must be uncommonly unsatisfactory, they thought, to have one's only son come home after ten years' absence (the most moderate doubled the actual period) to take his proper position in the county—with *delirium tremens*.

And certainly a change in the old man, both mental and bodily, had occurred exactly at that date. He had formerly taken a great deal of exercise—striding about his fields a wonder to his labourers (whose salutations he acknowledged without a word), or revisiting alone such of the ancient landmarks as still stood; but now he confined his rambles to the garden, or to that solitary part of the shrubbery called 'the Wilderness,' where he would walk to and fro for hours, leaning on his grand-daughter's arm. Few words were interchanged between them. She was afraid to encourage him to speak, lest he should make Mr Stanhope his topic; but this, of late, he had only done on one occasion. After a long silence, he had exclaimed suddenly: 'I wish you had been married, Nelly, darling, before this man had come back.'

She of course knew who was meant. He never mentioned his son William, now, by name. 'Nay,

grandfather,' said she tenderly; 'but then you would not have had my arm to lean upon. It is much better as it is. I am in no haste to wed.'

'A good child—always a good child,' returned he, patting her hand. 'If the chance does come, if it is not too late, Nelly, take it—take it; never mind an old man like me. Yes, I am too old—much too old. Why did not I die on Slogan, as your poor father did, whom you never knew? Why did he die at all, and why does this other one live? Do you remember the hill Slogan, Nelly?'

'Yes, grandfather, indeed I do. All the people at work upon it like bees, and the sea and the ships below. I can see the upper level, where I used to take you your dinner, as plainly now as though it were really before my eyes.'

'So can I, so can I, Nelly; though I can't always do it. I can't see so far, some days, for the mist. I mean,' added he hastily, 'for the mist in my eyes, for my brain is clear as ever—clear as ever.—Where was I?'

'We were talking of Slogan and the upper level, grandfather.'

'Yes, yes.—That was where we first saw him, Nelly. An excellent young gentleman. He gave me sherry out of his pocket-flask; and somehow I never get such sherry now. Nothing is so good as it used to be.'

'There are many things, grandfather, belonging to those old days, though they were hard ones, that one misses now—the noble prospects from the hills, and the glorious breezes from the sea, and—'

'The sea? Ay.' He looked round cautiously, and spoke low: 'Formosa is in the sea, is it not, Nelly?'

'Certainly, grandfather—it is an island. But—what is the matter?'

'Nothing. I am not so young as I was, and I am tired. I must sit down a bit—that's all; I feel faint. If I have said anything foolish, it was that, Nelly—the being so faint. Don't say a word about it to anybody, but I think it would do me good if I could only get to Slogan, and feel the air.'

'I would that we had never left it, grandfather,' exclaimed Ellen with involuntary bitterness. But the whole scene about the Moor Cottage was lying before her, with John Denton—honest sunbeam—in the midst.

'Not left it; that's nonsense, Nelly. Do you suppose he would have married you if we had stopped at that place? Never. As for me, though I am not happy, Nelly, not so happy as when I made the sparks fly with the big hammer, I am glad to be here, glad to have lived to make my will. It is a great and good thing that a dead man should be able to speak from out the grave, as I shall soon speak, lying in yonder churchyard, saying: "All to this woman, and none—or only a little, to that man." That is how I have left it, Nelly; Stanhope knows.'

This was a subject upon which the Squire's mind was always clear, and one that he would often descant upon, much to Ellen's embarrassment.

'Let us talk of something else, grandfather. Do not speak of that. It is much better not to do so.'

'Better not to do so,' muttered the old man; 'and yet, when I see her, and see him looking at her, I think I ought to speak. Poor Lucy!'

Ellen had paid small attention to these words; she was accustomed now only too often to find the

old Squire rambling and inconsequent in his talk, although this rarely occurred unless they were alone together. In other company, he seemed to her (and the sight was very pitiful) to keep strict watch over himself, and check by sudden silence his tendency to wander. In her faithful presence only he was at his ease. When William was by, his father never spoke, except occasionally in tones of stern reproof; but his sunken eyes watched and followed his son's motions ceaselessly, as one who has a stick in his hand watches an adder.

To Lucy's wonder, the old Squire asked her to take Ellen's place one day, and give him her arm in his usual garden-walk.

'I want you to speak to me, dear young lady,' he began in tremulous tones, 'as though I were your father's father, as indeed I am old enough to be. I want to know'—Here he stopped, and seemed to be casting about for some fitting word which would not come.

'To know what, dear Mr Blackburn?' said she gently. 'Let us sit down, for you seem fatigued, I think.'

'Yes, yes; I am very tired—always tired now. But that will not be for long. I want to ask you—for you are a good girl, like my own Nelly, and your opinion is worth having—let me see, let me put it as I should do, and if not, you will make allowance, I know. I cannot talk like my good friend Waller, with every word as it ought to be, and in the right place; but if he was to ask you: "How do you like that man who has come here of late?" what would you say, now, what would you say?'

'How do I like Mr William Blackburn, sir?'

'Yes, yes; who else? There he is yonder upon the terrace. A fine man—a man that will have money, perhaps. Hush, hush! There, I knew I should offend you.'

'No, sir; I am not offended.'

'Good girl, good girl! I always liked you, Lucy, always.—Now, how do you like that man?'

'O sir, that is a question—forgive me—which I cannot answer if his father puts it.'

'But if your father had put it?—Come, your father?'

'He never has put it, sir. But if he did, it would be my duty'—

'No, no; I don't ask what would be your duty—the truth, the truth!'

'Well, sir, your son is rough and rude; not kindly, as you are, in his speech and ways. Maybe it is his misfortune, not his fault; but being as he is, I do not like him.'

'Yes, yes; but there must be more than that, perhaps worse. Pray, tell me, for I am old, and may misjudge things; and I want to know.'

'Well, sir, his manner to his mother displeases me, and to Ellen likewise.'

'And to yourself? Do his ways to you—which I have often watched—displease you?'

'Sir, you press me somewhat unfairly; but, if I must needs tell the truth, they do.'

'One question more, Lucy, and I have done—only one more. So much depends upon your answering it; take time. Do you think'—he clasped his hands together and looked into her face appealingly—'that he is hopelessly wicked and depraved—capable of any cruelty—any crime?'

'O sir, I think no such thing. I cannot reply to such a question.'

'I see, I see,' moaned the old man. 'If he were ever so rich, and promised to improve, and though your father urged you to believe him—even then?'

'Sir, once for all, I could never love William Blackburn.'

'I knew it, I knew it!' cried the old man, wringing his hands. 'I ought to have spoken to him long ago, and I will speak to him to-day.'

'Not about me, Mr Blackburn!' exclaimed the young girl earnestly. 'I do beg of you not to do that. Nothing he can say, nothing he can do, will alter matters between us two.'

'Nor should they, my dear girl, nor should they,' answered the old Squire. 'He shall never trouble you more. He shall go away whence he came. I am master still in my own house, and I will not have him here.'

'I should be very sorry, Mr Blackburn, very sorry, to be the means, however innocent, of any rupture between you and your son. Please to spare me the pain of having thus requited your hospitality. You asked me in strict confidence, remember, to answer you certain questions, and I have answered them in confidence likewise.'

'You shall not marry him, Lucy, never fear. Your father shall have the money, all the same. It's all money, money, now-a-days; in my time—but there, that was long ago—folks married for love.'

Lucy was scarlet. It was terrible to hear her father's scheme thus openly spoken of by this dotting old man. If he knew, must not all the world know, and cry shame upon her! Tears of anger, of wounded pride, ran fast down her cheeks.

'Don't cry, girl,' resumed the old man in a firm and altered voice; 'that man yonder shall never have you in his power. I will see to that. I am glad you have spoken; I had but very little hope, and it is dead without much pain. I am stronger for knowing the truth—stronger to cope with him—stronger to overcome him. He shall see.'

The old man rose from his seat with a vigour he had not shewn for months, and straightened his huge frame as of old. There was no tremor in his limbs now as he moved slowly down the winding walk towards the terrace, though he moved alone, for Lucy remained upon the garden-bench with her face hidden in her hands. When he reached the level sward of the croquet-ground he stopped for an instant, but only to take breath, then walked straight up to his son, who was leaning on the terrace balustrade smoking a short pipe, and tapped him on the back.

'I want you, sir, for a few minutes' conversation in my room;' then strode on without waiting for a reply.

Mr William Blackburn shrugged his shoulders, tapped his pipe against the stone, to empty it of its contents, and muttering to himself: 'I wonder what the old fool is up to now,' followed the Squire into his sanctuary.

CHAPTER XXIV.—WILLIAM'S CHANCE.

When his son entered the room, Anthony Blackburn was already seated in the high-backed black armchair, which was his usual place; his eyes were fixed upon something on the wall, which was not a picture, although it was set in a frame, and on this he seemed to gaze, as if unconscious of his son's presence.

'Well, father, what is it?' Mr William's tone was sharp and sullen, and had the effect which was intended—of awakening the old man from his reflections.

'I want to say a few words to you, William,' said the old man, in tones that were strangely different from those in which he had last spoken; no longer stern, but hesitating, and grave, and sad. 'Sit down; no, not here, but yonder.' William took the chair indicated, more remote from his father than the one he had selected, and sat down on it with a hang-dog look.

'Do you know what I have been looking at for the last minute or two?'

'Yes,' growled the other; 'Family Tree.'

This interesting record of the House of Blackburn ornamented one side of the fireplace, as dead Ferdinand's hunting-map did the other, and had certain marks of red ink upon it, such as are seen in wreck-charts to indicate 'Totally lost.' These marks were placed opposite to the names of those of the Squire's forefathers who had served the ancient and honourable office of high sheriff. In no other respect, so far as public affairs were concerned, had one Blackburn ever differed from another. The country at large, nor even the county, had not been wiser or better for any one of them. Yet, like any other old tree, which, though without fruit or foliage, has stood for centuries, it was respected by many folks for its mere pertinacity of vegetable life; while the Squire himself regarded it much as the African regards his fetish; he worshipped it with a veneration that amounted to awe, and without even asking himself a reason for the faith that was in him.

'Three hundred and fifty years,' he murmured, 'have we lived at Redcombe, father and son, father and son!'

'And very right too,' was Mr William's practical reply. 'It would have been a pity and a shame ever to let a girl in, when there was a male heir.'

'A girl. Ah! that reminds me,' said the old man with a deep sigh. 'I tried to-day, William—I did give you that chance—whether an honest girl—one who would not have pained me if she could have helped it, I know—had any one good word to say for you, or of you. I thought to myself, if she can see any good in him, the terrible thought I have got into my old head cannot surely be true. I would rather have believed myself to be in my dotage—much rather. But she thinks of you like the rest—like all the rest.'

'I don't know who you mean by all the rest, sir,' answered William angrily; 'but there are people in this house who know very well upon which side their bread is buttered. There's Miss Ellen, for one!'

'Hush, hush, sir!' interrupted Anthony, with dignity; 'I will not have a word said against Ellen. She has no fault except that she is not a man—my grandson instead of my grand-daughter.'

'Well, that change is not likely to happen, is it?' inquired William.

'There's your mother likes you, to be sure,' continued the old man, taking no notice of this playful rejoinder. 'That would be something, if she were not your mother.'

'The old cuss has lost his last wits,' thought William to himself. 'If Ellen was his grandson, and his wife were not my mother! He has become a drivelling idiot.'

'And yet, God knows, I would give forty thousand pounds, ay, and house and land, and all I have in the world, not to believe it of you.—Don't come nearer, sir; keep where you are.'

At the mention of so large a sum, William had involuntarily hitched his chair a little nearer to his father. Notwithstanding his doubts of the old man's mental capacity, he shrewdly and justly suspected that the figures of the sum mentioned as being at the Squire's disposal were tolerably correct, and he felt himself irresistibly attracted towards the possessor of such a sum of ready money, and inclined to conciliate him at any cost. Even the most sullen of misanthropes will endeavour to make himself agreeable if the temptation is strong enough. But the tone of his father's speech was far more forbidding even than the words themselves; and his manner had a certain loathing and shrinking in it, which (though he knew he was no favourite) he could not at all explain, and which frightened him a little, notwithstanding that he once more murmured to himself: 'He is out of his wits, that's all.'

'What could the old fool be driving at? and why did he keep him at a distance thus, as though his touch, and even his nearness, carried contagion?'

Anthony's eyes had returned to the Blackburn pedigree, and it was full a minute before he spoke again.

'If I ask you one question, William, will you answer me truly—just the truth, and no more? These men here, your forefathers as well as mine, were men of their word. It used to be said, though they had their faults: "As sure as a Blackburn's word;" and perhaps this one virtue may remain in you yet, notwithstanding— But no; that is impossible; and the white head and beard shook slowly from side to side.

'What is it you mean, sir?' interposed William with simulated indignation. 'I tell no more lies than my neighbours. If you come to that, you are not so particular about truth-telling yourself, it strikes me, since Mr Waller is such a friend of yours. You don't suppose that soft-spoken gentleman never tells a lie, do you? And Lawyer Moffat, too, he's another; and there's plenty more I could tell off on my fingers, if'—

'How did Bess really die, William?'

The effect of this sudden and most unexpected question was curious enough. Not only did he to whom it was put remain silent, with his lips apart and his face of an ashen paleness, but the questioner also turned as ghostly as himself. In the case of the former, this was explicable; for the old Squire had never before evinced the slightest interest in his daughter-in-law's supposed fate, any more than he had in her while she was alive; and as for other folks, William had easily silenced their inquiries as to detail with a few sullen words. Nobody cares to press a bad-natured man upon a distasteful matter, as the widower had taken care to shew this was to him; and when his mother had been inclined to be curious, he had treated her successfully, much as he had treated the jail chaplain: 'Don't ask me about poor Bess, mother; the subject is too distressing to me. Her end was peace, and let that content you.' Which it did, and the more so, since the nature of the reply convinced her how much there was of good in the character of her darling son, though many doubted

it, because, forsooth, it did not always crop out upon the surface.

Thus Mr William, who, according to his promise at that harsh meeting, had transmitted to his wife the considerable sum of money paid to him by Richardson, had begun to consider the existence of Bess as an obstacle surmounted, a matter that was not to trouble him more; and this sudden reference to her from so unexpected a quarter embarrassed him exceedingly. What could it matter to his father how she died? and especially how could it so matter that the mere anxiety for the reply should change his face, so that it seemed more like that of a dead man—but for that same shrinking, loathing look which had come out afresh and more marked even than before—than that of the once ruddy Squire? He felt more alarmed and more at a loss for an answer than if the old man had asked him: 'Is your wife really dead?' Of course he had crudely contrived the story of her death, before he had ventured home. She had died of consumption (with which she had long been supposed to be threatened), and he had nursed her for many a long day and night. Not much of detail could be expected of such an end, and little, as we have said, had been asked for. But now, not only had inquiry thus unexpectedly arisen, but one which seemed to discredit his own statement.

'How did Bess really die, William?'

Absolutely nothing occurred to his conscience-stricken mind, at the moment, except procrastination; for evidently his father was in possession of some important fact, and the want of accord with it in his reply might be fraught with danger to his dearest hopes. He was as much in love with Lucy Waller as his coarse and selfish nature permitted him to be, and he was not going to own to any one that Bess was living, until he was absolutely obliged.

'Well, it is a very distressing story, father.'

'I ask, how did she die? If her end was such as you told your mother, there must have been a certificate of death; let me have that. But no; you are not to be trusted. I will write for it to Formosa myself.'

'You would give yourself a needless trouble, sir,' replied William Blackburn slowly. He saw the danger looming large and near before him, and since there was a lie that lay ready to his tongue by which it might be evaded, he did not hesitate a moment to make use of it. 'No such certificate exists; and since you press me so unmercifully—though I had hoped to spare myself so sad a story—I must needs tell you why my poor wife was never buried.'

The window was closed, and there was a fire on that late autumn day in the little room, yet the old man shivered, and seemed to shrink within himself.

'One moment, sir,' said he in trembling tones. 'You talk of sparing yourself; I am a very old and broken man; spare me. I do not know for certain what you are about to say. But if—if you are conscious in your mind—of something (and your face seems to tell me so) which it is better for your father not to hear—some act that no eyes save those of the All-seeing have witnessed, and which should make you hide yourself from the sight of man for ever, do not tell me the lie which your lips are about to frame. If you have any touch of feeling left for him that begat you, do not speak. I shall understand (Heaven help me!) your

silence well enough. Go in peace, if God has peace to give you, and never darken these doors again. You shall have money without stint; but go; steal off at once; the money shall be sent wherever you appoint; but as you value your worthless life, dare not to pollute your mother's loving lips with a kiss of farewell!

The old Squire looked furtively up with haggard eyes, and beheld on his son's face a look of the most genuine and unfeigned amazement.

'What!' continued he with a strange tremulous joy, which seemed to pervade his very limbs as well as his speech, 'is it possible that I deceive myself, that I have been racked and tortured for so long by a baseless suspicion? Speak, William, speak; and if you are innocent, if you have not done this deed, I swear I will forget all else you have done amiss, and only remember that you are my only son.'

Perhaps there are no men so base, but that beneficent Fortune now and again affords them some opportunity of starting afresh in the race of life, less weighted than could reasonably be expected, by the transgressions of their Past. The unseaworthy and wretched bark on which they have been aboard so long, nears the land so close that it does but require one stride to be ashore and safe. They have had experience enough (as one would think) of the stormy sea, now raised on the froth of the wave, now sunk in its gloomy trough, and it needs but a moment's courage, one quick decisive step, to reach *terra firma*; and yet how seldom they take it! Such a chance now presented itself to William Blackburn, and he deliberately declined to avail himself of it. It had become possible for him, in a quite unexpected and not-to-be-hoped-for fashion, to be reconciled with his father; to have all old scores wiped out, no matter how heavy they might be (it was impossible, looking on his father's face, to doubt it), provided only that he should make a clean breast of it, and tell the truth. But the condition was too hard. It seemed so much easier to use the materials of the lie which he had, as it were, by him.

'I can make no sort of guess, father,' said he coldly, 'of the nature of the particular suspicion which you harbour against me just at present. You have been suspicious of me all my life, and more or less, as now, without cause. As to silence respecting my wife's death, I have no reason to keep silence except that which I have already mentioned, the desire to spare myself, but more particularly my mother, a painful narration. Poor Bess came to her end, not indeed by consumption, but after a much sadder fashion. Her death was the result of accident—poor soul, she was drowned.'

There was a long pause, and a silence unbroken save by the autumn wind moaning at the casement, and a cinder dropping from the fire.

'At sea?' asked the old man in a hollow voice, in which there was still the distant echo of a hope.

'No, sir, not at sea. When walking in the dusk about Formosa, she fell down a steep and terrible place they call the well-hole'—

Anthony Blackburn rose with a piercing cry, and tottered to the window-corner, as though to put as great a space as possible between him and his son.

'You lie, you lie!' cried he; 'she did *not* fall. You pushed her down. I heard it from your own lips the other night, when you were raving. You

told the truth then; yes, you did—you did. Murderer! murderer!'

The window was violently thrown open from the outside, and Herbert Stanhope strode over the sill.

'What is the matter, Mr Blackburn? Has this fellow dared to strike you?'

Old Anthony had sunk upon the ground, his shoulders only supported by the angle of the wall. His limbs hung strangely loose and still, and his lip was drawn upon one side; but still he made shift to speak. 'No, no; he has not smitten me; it is Heaven that has smitten me.—Keep near me, Stanhope—keep quite close—and send him away out of my sight for ever.'

INSECT PLAGUES OF THE UPPER AMAZONS.

NONE but those who have travelled on the Upper Amazons can have any idea of the number and voracity of the insect torments which work their wicked will on the bodies of the unfortunates exposed to their attacks; and as the 'sancudos,' as those insects commonly known to Europeans as 'mosquitoes' are here called (the term mosquito being applied to a small sand-fly, of which we shall speak hereafter), form by far the most important section, and indeed, as a common topic of conversation, fill the place of the weather in England, we will allot them the first place on the list.

In the 'Pueblos' villages, round which the forest is cleared away for some distance, the sancudos are generally pretty quiet during the day, except where darkness prevails: there they are ever busy; and there is a device much practised by the inhabitants for getting rid of them from the houses, which we will here relate. The window-frames—at least in those favoured establishments which possess windows—are covered with fine gauze, instead of glass; now, just before sundown, all the sancudos inside a house fly towards the light: taking advantage of this peculiarity, each inhabitant, at the approach of night, shuts up his house, and prevents the entrance of light, except through one window. On the inside of the gauze, stretched over the frames, all, or nearly all, the sancudos in the house will now collect; and, on the window being opened, fly out immediately. The moment the sun sinks below the horizon, the window is closed; and, by the practice of this precaution, and the assistance of good mosquito curtains, one may sometimes enjoy a comfortable night's rest. But let the window be left open five minutes only after sundown, and misery will attend you, for your house will be full; each sancudo that departed, having seemingly returned with all his kinsfolk and acquaintance. The triumphant note of a sancudo who has made his way under your curtains is, to our mind, more annoying than even his bite; and should you have been careless in getting into bed, and been accompanied by two or three of these blood-suckers, we will defy you to sleep until you have exterminated them. You lie still, and hear them buzzing round you; presently one approaches, and you make sure you have him nicely settled on your cheek; you give yourself an awful slap in the face; but—you don't kill the sancudo; on the contrary, you only hear him hum more merrily than ever. He knows very well you were not asleep, and is only amusing himself. When you are really at rest, he will have your blood. Though you may repeat the slapping

process ever so often, you will never kill one; and the only way to insure peace is to get up, strike a light (every one takes a candle and matches to bed with him), and hunt them regularly down, taking care not to set the 'mosquitero' on fire in so doing.

In the forest and on the river, the sancudos are always busy day and night. When we first came up the river, I have known men get into the vessel's tops, and there cover themselves with sacks, notwithstanding the heat, rather than remain below exposed to their attacks. They punish women and children new to the country tremendously, frequently making them look as if they had small-pox.

Fortunately, they cannot stand a current of air, and so, when under weigh, we were comparatively free from them; but when at anchor, especially at feeding-time, they were something awful. A finer illustration of 'dinner under difficulties,' than was sometimes presented by our mess, could scarcely be imagined. A spectacle of men, their coats tied tightly round their wrists, and their trousers round their ankles, walking after the manner of a caged wild beast, a plate in one hand, a fork in the other, would probably have suggested the idea of escaped lunatics to an observer at a short distance to whom the cause would be invisible: and this is no exaggeration. We used to try all manner of devices to get rid of them, but without lasting effect. Creosote will certainly keep them off; but the remedy is as bad as the disease. Whitewash will drive them away; but when dry, its power ceases; and the only thing to do is either to cover all exposed parts of the body with black pigment *à la mode Indienne*, or else, as these Yankees say, to 'grin and bear it.'

Scarcely less troublesome than the sancudos are the mosquitoes, or sand-flies, although they have the negative merit of biting only by day. They are minute creatures, not much larger than a pin's head, they resemble much in shape the *Cimex* genus, and prefer the backs of the hands to any other spot for their attacks. But, unlike the sancudo, who, when undisturbed, gorges himself until unable to fly, and becomes an easy prey to your avenging finger, the mosquito never seems to take too much to prevent his easy escape on the slightest appearance of danger, being evidently just as wide awake when full as when empty; wherever he has sucked, he leaves a little black mark, from the blood coagulating in the puncture, and you find your hands occasionally presenting a most curious mottled appearance, from the attacks of these little wretches. Everywhere in long grass lurks the 'moquim,' a little red insect, so small as to be almost imperceptible, but which fastens on the legs, causing the most intolerable itching. The plan we adopted was, on our return from shooting-excursions, to wash all the lower parts of the body with 'Cachaga' (cane spirit); and this used to answer admirably.

There is a fly which burrows in the skin and deposits an egg, both in human beings and animals. This produces a maggot, similar in shape to that of the common blow-fly, but much larger. Of course, inflammation in the part, followed by supuration and discharge or extraction of the foreign body, take place. Although the maggot is probably analogous to the Guinea-worm, it differs from it in being always discharged entire, whereas the

Guinea-worm requires very careful and gradual extraction.

Then there are 'chigos,' which burrow mostly in the soles of the feet. You feel an intense itching, and on examination, find a little thing like a pea just under the epidermis; this is the bag containing the young chigos, which must be carefully picked out with the point of a knife, and the cavity left filled with tobacco-ash. It is said that if the bag is broken, and the young chigos escape, serious consequences will result. This, however, we do not believe, as we have broken many in the act of extracting them from our own feet; but always using plenty of tobacco-ash, we never experienced any inconvenience. Huge spiders abound, whose very appearance inspires a wholesome dread of a nearer acquaintance, but which are harmless enough if let alone. In fact, on board our steamers, almost every cabin was tenanted by one large spider, whose presence was tolerated on account of his being a deadly foe to cockroaches, which abominable creatures used to swarm on board. Sometimes he would not be visible for a fortnight or more at a time; but he would leave tokens that he was 'all there,' in the shape of the empty husks of cockroaches, from which he had carefully abstracted the interior. These spiders have the power of springing upon their prey from a distance, and some of them are so large and powerful as to kill and devour small birds.

In passing through the narrow forest-paths, it is necessary to be on the look-out for the wood-ticks, which are very difficult to get rid of, if once firmly attached; also for the huge black ants, an inch and a half in length, with stings like a hornet's; and the saüba ant, without sting, but armed with nippers like a pair of surgical bone-forceps, which are running about everywhere. One may sometimes chance upon a column of the dreaded 'fire-ants,' marching in regular military order; and if you do, the only thing is to bolt at once, for neither man nor beast may withstand the fire-ant and live. Occasionally one remarks the slender form of a tree-snake gliding away, or the deadly 'tucu-riju' basking in a sunny spot; while from out the mossy roots of the great trees, quaint little horned frogs peer at you, and startled lizards patter away over the dead leaves. When at length you stop to rest, take care to examine your camping-ground, lest you find that centipede or scorpion may fancy the same locality.

Frequently on board our steamer, both centipedes and scorpions would be killed, introduced, no doubt, in the wood used for fuel. One day, as we were watching the hands taking wood from canoes alongside, from one of the logs pitched on board was dislodged a scorpion, which fell on the naked left arm of a man keeping tally at the gangway. Astonished by his sudden flight through the air, the animal remained perfectly still. The man never moved a muscle, and quietly raising his right hand, flipped it away with his fingers and thumb. It was very neatly and coolly done; and he thus escaped a sting, which he no doubt would have received had he tried to brush it hastily away. Ants are a horrid plague, both afloat and ashore. It is amusing to see a host of small ants carrying off the body of a defunct cockroach, giving one the idea of mice departing with a dead elephant. But they are a great nuisance. They will not, however, walk over cotton wool; and anything

placed on or enclosed by it is safe from them. The saüba ants are, we think, the greatest depredators of any. They form regular communities, where each individual, workers, soldiers, &c., has his own especial line of duty, and are great excavators. Mr Bates, in his work the *Naturalist on the Amazon*, has given a very capital description of these ants; but we fancy he has omitted to mention the extremely pungent aromatic smell they, or at least their nests possess. These ants are extremely destructive to cacao plantations, stripping the trees of their leaves; they will carry away a large basket of grain in a single night, should any of them come across it. A migration takes place sometimes from the parent stock, some of the ants becoming winged, and flying off. Few, however, escape the Indians, who are always on the watch for these migrations, and by whom these winged ants are considered rather a *bonne bouche*. They catch and stuff them into bottles, occasionally lightening the work by pulling the wings off one, and devouring him alive. We never had the courage to taste one, although we have partaken of many strange dishes. 'Monkey' and 'parrot' are both good, 'tapir' and 'manatee' not bad, and peccary *Al*; but we never ate a saüba ant; nor could we ever taste a drink much affected by the Indians, and called 'massato,' of which there is generally a large jar standing in the corner of every Indian dwelling. They always offer it to visitors; but their mode of so doing is not inviting, as it consists in a black or rather copper coloured paw being thrust into the aforesaid jar, which contains a sort of pulp, and bringing up a handful, which is squeezed into a calabash, and placed at your disposal. This pulp is, however, produced by means which, from unwillingness to disturb the stomachs of our readers, we refrain from relating. Those ants which escape the Indians fall a prey to flocks of hawks and other birds, which make their appearance as soon as ever a migration commences.

The Upper Amazons are little known to Englishmen, and in this article we have endeavoured to describe a few, and but a few, of the annoyances to which the resident thereon is subject, and which certainly do not augment the charms of a life otherwise by no means luxurious. It will probably surprise many to hear that one gets very tired of turtle. But such is the fact, when it forms the basis of every meal; although (and for this hint we believe ourselves entitled to gastronomic gratitude) a young turtle, roasted in its upper shell, is one of the greatest delicacies of an Amazonian dinner, and might be introduced to civilised palates with much advantage. *Probatum est.*

ROBERT'S CAPITAL HIT.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER III.

If there be such a thing in England as a cheerful waiting-room, which I do not believe, it certainly was not to be found at the London Bridge Railway Station ten years ago. It is almost that time since I have seen the dingy apartment, with the deplorable, high-silled windows; the shabby floor-clothed floors; the ingeniously uncomfortable benches; the heavy, dust-laden tables; the leather-bound Testaments; the dumpy bottle of stale,

undrinkable water; the muggy glass; and the out-of-date time-table, which rendered a sojourn in the precincts of the London Bridge Railway a penitential exercise. Everything may be changed now, for aught I know, and the general first-class waiting-room may be as handsome, cheerful, refined, and habitable an apartment as those assigned to a similar purpose on the other side of the Channel, where the railways belong to the government, and the government best secures its own interests by consulting the convenience and the tastes of the people. I only know that waiting-room was a fearsome place on that fine summer forenoon, when I, finding I had missed a train for Sydenham, and should have an hour to wait for the next, seated myself despondently on one of the benches, on the surface of whose leather covering dust and grease contended for the supremacy, and made up my mind, ruefully, that this was almost as bad as putting up with Mrs John at Acanthus Villa.

A woman, whose face wore an expression of chronic discontent and fatigue, and two tired children, were in the dreary waiting-room; the former leaning her head forlornly in an angle of the wall; while the latter kicked the panels under the high-silled windows, and drummed upon the dirty lower panes, which they could hardly reach. I had bought a morning paper, but I did not feel inclined to read it. I am not a sufficiently large-minded woman to find solace for private trouble in public affairs, and my own small sphere occupies me to the exclusion of nobler themes. If the philosopher who defined the difference between the male and female intellect as integral, consisting in the incapacity of women to entertain abstract ideas, had known me, I am sure he might have cited me triumphantly in support of his theory. I remember one day when we were talking on this very subject of speculations, Robert said to me: 'Martha, my dear, you are a true woman, as to your brain; you have no faculty of generalisation.' And I replied: 'I daresay not. I have not the least notion what you mean; but I don't want to have the notion or the faculty either.' I found out afterwards what he meant, and I know he is right. If Robert were an officer in the army, I know I could not understand or care about war or peace, except as his safety and welfare should be concerned in them; and so it would be in every other case; so it was in this particular case. The Campo de los Angeles, with all its public and private interests, resolved itself for me into Robert's being mortified or pleased by the result of his undertaking and journey. Of all the unheroic, unambitious, narrow-minded women in the world, I do believe I am the most unheroic, unambitious, and narrow-minded.

No, I could not read the morning paper; and I took to gazing listlessly out at the large, intricate, dirty, comfortless station, where trains were arriving, departing, or standing about, having their doors slurred with water, and their windows

pulled violently up, to be imperfectly rubbed with dirty cloths. The time passed heavily, and I had just ascertained that only a quarter of an hour of waiting had gone over, when I saw a man, whose appearance seemed familiar to me, coming along the platform from a train which had stopped at some distance, and approaching the waiting-room. In a few moments he had reached the threshold, followed by a porter, to whom he was speaking, and carrying a black bag. This person was Mr Sloane, of whom Robert had spoken, whom we had met occasionally at Acanthus Lodge; and the porter seemed to know him, and his infirmity, for he roared his replies to the questions which were put to him.

'You're sure you haven't seen him?'

'Yes, sir, quite sure,' shouted the porter.

By this time they were both in the room, and Mr Sloane had placed his black bag on the huge dusty table. He sat down with his back to the window at which I was standing.

'Very extraordinary,' he said, in a voice almost as loud as that in which the porter had spoken, and which, together with his frowning and forbidding appearance, sent the children to their mother's side, whence they directed alarmed looks at the large gentleman who made himself so very much at home—'very extraordinary. I never knew him to be late before—never.'

'Perhaps the message did not reach him soon enough, sir,' the porter said, and evidently wished to get away, for he looked fussily out of window, as if he saw a train coming.

'Nonsense, nonsense,' and Mr Sloane roared more loudly than before. 'The message was in plenty of time. However, I must wait. Do you look sharp out there; you'll be on the platform, I suppose!'

'Yes, sir,' answered the man.

'I can't stand about there; and if he isn't watched, he may go away without seeing me. Look out for him. I'll wait a quarter of an hour or so; and if you see him, send him in here.'

He gave the man a shilling; and turning sulkily to the table, undid the spring fastening of his bag, and took out several papers tied together with red tape. The porter passed the window the next moment with one of his fellows, nodding his head and jerking his thumb in the direction of the unconscious Mr Sloane, who was numbling and growling over his papers like a discontented bear. He had not seen me, and I had no wish to attract his attention. He would probably think it a great nuisance to have to talk to me during our common durance, and I found it always very fatiguing to talk to him, for he was uninteresting, deaf, rude, and irritable. He had just come up from Sydenham, I supposed, and had made an appointment with some individual, who had not kept it, to meet him at the station. I continued my unobservant look-out upon the platform, and Mr Sloane sat with his back to me, but not far from me, as I stood, still growling over his papers, while the tired children continued to watch him with round, alarmed eyes.

Presently I heard him scrabbling among the papers still in his bag, and muttering: 'Now, where the deuce is it? Where can I have put it? I certainly had it this morning, and I did not take it out in the train. Let me see. Did I?—No, certainly not.' Then he clicked his tongue against

his teeth, with that sound unrenderable in words which signifies vexation, and searched through the papers again. I turned half round, and watched the search, but he did not notice me. He grew more and more angry and impatient; turned his bag up with the open mouth downwards; shook all its contents out upon the table; turned them over unavailingly—muttering all the time, sometimes inaudibly, but at others so that I could catch his words: 'There; if I've come without that, he might as well have staid away as not. What the deuce have I done with it? If I could even remember the address—Hôtel de l'Univers, was it? Hôtel de Rouen? Hôtel de Calais? Hôtel de something or other. What was it?' Now he was frantically searching his pockets, of which—as he was wrapped up as if in mid-winter on this fine forenoon in May—he had several; and presently he pulled out a white silk muffler, and with it a letter, which fell to the ground, and on which he pounced with a grunt of satisfaction, muttering: 'How the deuce did it get there?'

'Your train, ma'am,' said the porter to whom Mr Sloane had given the shilling, 'just starting.—Come along, little uns;' and he good-naturedly took the smaller child in his arms, while the mother led the other away, who went with a backward glance at the gruff old gentleman, with whom I now found myself alone.

He unfolded the letter, which was written on large business-like paper, and spreading it out on the table, set his elbows on either side of it, and holding his head between his hands, began to mutter and mumble more continuously and loudly than before. My position was not pleasant; he was evidently skimming the letter in order to find out some particular passage—probably the name of the hotel he had been trying to recall. I could distinctly hear what he said where I stood, and I could not change my position without attracting his attention, which I particularly wished to avoid. I was thinking that I must do this unpleasant thing, however, when Mr Sloane said, quite aloud: 'Hôtel d'Espagne! That's it, of course. That's where Dorrisson's man found him!' and proceeded to make a memorandum in his pocket-book. The words so startled me, that I turned quite round, and then and there proved myself incapable of entertaining, or at least of acting on the abstract idea of honour, for I felt instinctively that if I listened to this deaf gentleman's communing with himself, I should learn something which it might be of importance to Robert to know, and it never occurred to me not to listen. Indeed—so confused are the feminine 'moral ideas'—I had a notion that there was something 'providential' in the circumstances. At anyrate, I stood quite still, and sideways, at a few feet from Mr Sloane, who presently began to read the letter before him in an audible voice, and almost consecutively. The earlier passages of the letter were of no importance; but soon I heard this: 'Disney is playing an artful game; but I daresay as much for the fun as for the profit of it. But to prolong this kind of fun does not suit us, so I have determined to bring the matter to a conclusion. I have not happened to meet Dorrisson's man, though I know he is in Paris; indeed, Disney has said as much, and almost acknowledged the game he is playing; so I suppose he has given him a rendezvous somewhere else. Of course, if it were worth our while,

we could ascertain that very easily, but it is not. I am resolved now to use the five hundred pounds assigned debt, which Colvill prepared as a last resource, in case Disney was unmanageable, or Dorrisson's man was treading too closely on our heels. Fortunately, the method of procedure here, in matters of the kind, is very summary; and I know, as a fact, that it would not be possible for Disney to lay his hands on five hundred pounds. Indeed, living the life he does, I am surprised he has five pounds in his pocket. I have just now given instructions to Fayolle's people. The five hundred pounds debt to Roberts and Smith is safely assigned to them, as you are aware, and they will take immediate action. Disney will find himself in a very short time lodged at Clucky; and the man who brings him the ready money to get him out will be the successful candidate for Campo de los Angeles. It is fortunate there is such an effectual screw ready to be put on, for he really is the most tiresome fellow, the most slippery customer, I ever had to deal with. But we have him now. Yesterday, he was so cool upon our bargain, had so much the air of a man who was going to slip through my fingers, I made up my mind this must be done at once. Fayolle's people will act to-morrow, so don't let any time be lost on your side. Let me have a draft on Lafitte for five hundred and fifty pounds by the tenth. I will report progress to-morrow.' Then came a pause, and some mumbled sentences which I did not catch. I had listened with painful intensity, I had heard with perfect distinctness, but my mind was not clear enough to take note, in any practical sense, of its own impressions. I knew I should not forget a word that I had heard, though some portions of the letter came back to me with more force than the others. I knew my memory was quite trustworthy, but there might be more for me to hear. After a little, I should be able to collect my thoughts, and decide on what was to be done. I remained motionless, and still intently listening; but Mr Sloane thrust the letter, with a final impatient grunt, into his bag, snapped the lock, and rose. I turned my face to the window, and leaned my forehead against the glass. It would have been unfortunate that he should recognise me just then, as he probably knew who was 'Dorrisson's man,' whom his correspondent was so very certain about outwitting. Mr Sloane was walking heavily to the door, when the porter again made his appearance, and said: 'Mr Colvill's a comin' in, sir;' and in the next breath: 'Your train now, ma'am.'

Mr Sloane hurried out, and I caught sight of a slight dark man, whom he met a few paces from the door of the waiting-room, and with whom he walked away.

'Your train, ma'am,' repeated the waiter.
'Thank you,' I answered; 'I have changed my mind; I am not going.'

The man looked a little surprised, but I suppose railway porters see a good many eccentric and foolish people in the course of their lives; and this one said nothing to indicate that to have waited nearly an hour for a particular train, in such an uninviting place, and then change one's mind about travelling by it, was not the most orderly and rational of proceedings. I left the station and crossed over to the enclosed passage, which led, in arcade fashion, in those days, to the Tooley Street

side, but which no longer exists. In that passage there were queer little shops, where the railway passenger could rush in and purchase fruit, cakes, confectionery, dolls, writing-desks, railway-rugs, spectacles, paper-knives, slippers, and other useful commodities. I entered the cake-shop near the entrance, bought some pastry, which gave me an excuse for asking for a seat; and then, opening my pocket-book on the counter, I wrote down every word of the letter I had heard read out by Mr Sloane. I had no doubt of the entire correctness with which I reproduced it; the sentences arranged themselves in my memory with unerring exactness: '*Disney will find himself in a very short time lodged at Clucky; and the man who brings him the ready money to get him out will be the successful candidate for Campo de los Angeles.*'

I tried to recall what it was I had heard Robert telling John about the summary action of French law in cases of debt, and how creditors in England could assign their debtors' obligations to French holders, and so bring them under the action of the law; but I had no very clear notion of it all. It did not matter, however. No doubt, the writer of that letter knew what he was about, and my business was to act on the information I had obtained.

I had Robert's letter with me, and now read it carefully again. The other formed a startling commentary upon it. Mr Dorrisson was not in town, so that I could not go to him, tell him what I had found out, and leave him to circumvent the designs of the other party. I retraced my steps to the London Bridge Railway Station, and entering the continental department, ascertained the hour at which the mail-train for Paris, *via* Dover and Calais, would be despatched. Six o'clock P.M. It was now half-past eleven. There was time enough, but none to spare, for what I had to do.

Mr John Hackett had his place of business, and also his place of abode, at No. 300 Lincoln's Inn Fields. He was the quietest and most business-like of men, and held Lincoln's Inn, out of whose precincts he rarely stirred, in reverence and admiration worthy of Tim Linkinwater. He had been an old friend of my parents, and took a kindly interest in myself and Gerty. He had not approved of my marriage, not on particular, but on general grounds. He did not see the good of it. Let people keep to themselves, and spend their little or much money, as the case might be, on themselves—that was his doctrine. He was very consistent; he had never married, or been suspected of the remotest notion of paying attention to any woman in his life. I don't know what his exact connection with the legal profession was. I believe he had some, though not 'a lawyer,' in the precise sense of the term; but, whatever his business was, he stuck to it pertinaciously, never went out, or had company at home, and cherished nothing except his cat and his cough. I believe to have lost either would have grieved him sorely.

The first thing I had to do was to see Mr John Hackett. That was easy; but I was not so sure about what was to come after, and had plenty of time to become very uncertain and uncomfortable about it, before a dreadful jingling, jolting 'four-wheeler' deposited me at his door. What a fool I was not to have gone in a Hansom, but I am as inconsistent as most women. I had made up my mind to do rather a daring thing, but I had not the

courage to get into a Hansom by myself! It is ten years ago, you must remember.

Mr Hackett was at home, and could see me; and in a short time I found myself in his private office—a gloomy room, with a very oppressive smell of parchment and mouldy ink about it—and explaining to him, while he maintained profound silence, that I had come to ask him for my five hundred pounds. I am sure my stammering speech and confused countenance would have justified Mr Hackett in suspecting me of the most nefarious designs in making this application. If he had thought I wanted the money in order to run away from Robert, and endow a gay Lothario with all my worldly goods, I should not have blamed him. This suspicion did not present itself to him, but I saw at once that which did.

'It is very odd that you should come in this way, and ask me for this sum, without giving me any notice,' said Mr Hackett severely.

'I know it is,' I replied; 'but Mr Heron told me he had explained to you that I had the right to claim it, of my own accord, at any time, and I am sure you will not make any difficulty about letting me have it. It is of immense importance to me, to Mr Heron, that there should not be an hour's delay.'

'Soh!' said Mr Hackett slowly; 'this is to follow the rest, I suppose. Well, well, it is of a piece with the folly of all you women. I thought the nest-egg would not be left long.'

How angry I felt with him! Afterwards, when Robert explained that Mr Hackett, who did not know any of the circumstances, had taken a perfectly correct and sensible view of the case, and had been very right and very kind in deploring his inability to prevent my committing what it was impossible for him to regard otherwise than as an act of arrant folly, I pretended to be convinced, but I was not. More want of generalisation, I suppose, another instance of inability to take in 'abstract ideas!'

'I cannot explain myself fully, Mr Hackett,' I said; 'and of course I cannot make you give me the money, if you won't; I can only assure you that if you do not give it to me, you will do me an irreparable injury.'

'Don't excite yourself,' said Mr Hackett; 'you shall have the money—not with my free will, remember; and I hope you will never regret having insisted upon it. I hold your husband's letter of instructions: you are quite right about that; but I am sorry to have to act on it. I hoped your husband would have had more wisdom and self-control.'

'My husband has plenty of wisdom and plenty of self-control,' I answered sharply; 'but the money is wanted for a matter in which the need could not have been foreseen.'

'Ay, ay, I know—the old story. No one ever foresees. However, it's no business of mine.'

'You shall know all about it afterwards, Mr Hackett,' I said imploringly; 'only believe me now, that I want the money for a good purpose. Indeed, it shall be replaced in your hands in a few days.'

He shook his head, but said nothing; then turned his chair round to his desk, and opened a long drawer, from whence he took a cheque-book and a slip of paper with a stamp upon it. Slowly and deliberately he made out the cheque. I watched

the writing of every letter of it. Then he wrote something on the oblong slip of stamped paper, and telling me that it was a receipt for five hundred pounds, directed me to sign it. I did so, and he then handed me the precious cheque.

'Shall I send and get it cashed for you?' he asked me.

'No, thank you,' I said eagerly; 'I am going to the neighbourhood of the Bank, and will cash it myself.'

'Take care where you put it,' he said; 'and look sharp after your purse as you come out of the Bank.'

'Good-bye, Mr Hackett, and a thousand thanks.'

'Good-bye, Mrs Heron: you are a very foolish woman, and I hope you may not yet be very sorry for this day's work.'

He came with me to the cab, for all that, and shook hands with me when I was seated in it; and said: 'Tell Heron I should be glad to see him.'

'I will, when he returns from Paris.'

The cab moved on, and I left Mr Hackett, looking surprised. It had not occurred to me that he did not know Robert was away. He must have wondered more than ever what I wanted with the money.

It was just one o'clock when I reached the Bank of England. I cashed my precious cheque, taking the money in five notes of a hundred pounds each; and having fastened my purse securely into the bosom of my dress, I drove once more to the London Bridge Railway Station, and found a train, in which I took my place, just about to start for Sydenham.

My cousin, Mrs Eccles, lived close to the station at Sydenham, in a small house, with the prettiest of gardens and the greenest of palings. She was a widow, neither young nor handsome, but both clever and sensible, and I enjoyed her society very much. I did not see her often, because nothing would induce her to encounter the best-parlour régime of Clapham, and my mother-in-law regarded her as an eccentric person, a dubious companion for a well-regulated young woman. If Mrs Heron did not 'hold with' speculators, she held still less with clever women. She did not see the good of it, for her part—literary women never made good wives, or housekeepers, and they had much better leave 'such things'—by which my mother-in-law meant the writing of books—to men, who had sense. One of the trials, then, that had attended my removal to Clapham, and the relinquishment of our own happy little house, was the decrease in my opportunities of seeing my cousin. Mrs Eccles was writing in her tiny drawing-room, and was surprised and pleased to see me. I told her at once what had happened, and was much reassured by her composed acquiescence in my own plan of proceeding.

'Yes, of course,' she said. 'You must go to Paris by to-night's mail, and take the money to your husband. Whether this Mr Disney is in Clichy or out of it, this will secure Mr Heron's success; and equally, of course, your mother-in-law, and that detestable British matron, Mrs John Heron, must not know anything about it.'

'That was my chief difficulty—I felt it ought to be avoided, if possible: I could not explain things to them; and if they thought I had merely gone off to Paris, to join Robert, for a freak! oh, my goodness, I am sure I don't know what they

would say of me, or when I should hear the end of it!"

"I should think not, indeed. No, they must not know. You must do this little bit of business quietly—just going to Paris to-night, and coming back by the mail to-morrow night. When you have put the money and the information into your husband's hands, you have nothing more to do in the matter; leave him to make use of them."

"I understand all that," I replied; "but the difficulty is to account for my absence. My mother-in-law will be so surprised and alarmed, if I don't return. I came down to ask you how I should explain my going, for I did not see how I could by any ingenuity conceal it."

Mrs Eccles thought for a moment, then said briskly: "She would never think of coming here to look for you, would she, if you told her you would remain with me for a couple of days?"

"No, I don't think she would; but I am sure she would make my staying here, during Robert's absence, a cause of offence, and harp upon it for many a day."

"Never mind that; something must be encountered in a case like this; and it is better you should be blamed for staying here, than subjected to the frightful accusation of being a clever woman, who is doing a sensible thing to help her husband in a difficulty. You'll get over the one—but the other? Think of the inconsistency, my dear! It would never do. You must write a note from here—Mrs Heron will get it to-night, just when she will be expecting you home—and in that note you must tell a fib or two. You must say I have prevailed upon you to remain here for a couple of days, and that you will return to Clapham on Saturday afternoon."

"Well—but—if she should ever find it out?"

("Moral ideas" again.)

"I don't think she will; but if she ever does, lay the blame on Robert. My belief is you will succeed in managing this affair, and your share in it will never be suspected; and Robert's capital hit will elevate him in the opinion of his mother—success always does elevate people in every one's opinion, you know; and all will go on much better for the future."

"You will have to lend me the money for my travelling expenses," I said; "I have only ten shillings, beside my five hundred pounds."

"I'll do that," replied my cousin; "and also I will lend you a little bag and a brush and comb; and those, with a collar and a couple of pocket-handkerchiefs, will be all the luggage there can be any occasion for you to take with you. And now, you are going to lie down and rest, until your dinner is ready, and to put all care and anxiety off your mind, for I will undertake that you shall be at London Bridge in time for the mail-train to Dover."

She was a very cheering, helpful sort of woman; a capital person to have with one in any trouble, or when one was nervous or undecided. There was no indecision about her. I wrote the note, which I made as vague as possible, with a cowardly kind of notion that thereby I reduced the magnitude of the fibs which I had to resort to. There was clearly no alternative but to keep my mother-in-law in ignorance of my audacious act in taking the last money I possessed to Robert, on such an errand. I had a good rest, though I could not

sleep, and a good dinner, during which Mrs Eccles talked to me in her cheery, bright, encouraging way, and made fun of my first appearance in the character of an unprotected female. She kept her word in every particular. She came with me to London Bridge; she bought my ticket, and selected a corner seat for me in a comfortable carriage; and as the train moved out of the station, I saw her bright, plain, sensible face to the last, and felt as if she were still patting me on the back.

I shall never forget Robert's face when he came to the door of the carriage in which I sat, at the *porte-cochère* of the Hôtel de Calais, and saw who was the 'lady' who had requested to see him; and I shall never forget what he said to me, when he had heard my story, told with the utmost incoherence and nervousness, for I broke down the moment I saw him, and felt that I need not be strong-minded any longer. But I made him understand it somehow, and put the money into his hands. What he said was very precious to me, and might have been dangerous, as provocative of self-conceit, had I not had the counterpoise of my mother-in-law and Mrs John to any risk of my thinking myself ready-witted. I asked him only one thing, in return for what he was pleased to call a service of incalculable importance: it was, that he would never tell any one, if he succeeded, that I had had any part in the transaction. He promised; and I think he has kept his word pretty well. But Mr Dorrisson asked to be introduced to me not long after, when everything had succeeded, and took an early opportunity of presenting me with some beautiful ornaments; and has ever since evinced a livelier interest in me than is to be quite accounted for by the business relations between him and Robert.

I had a long rest, while Robert hurried away to see what had befallen Mr Disney. In some hours he returned, and told me his adventures. They are easily summed up, in the words of Mr Sloane's discomfited correspondent, who narrowly escaped being thrown out of window the next day by the enraged colonial—in the words which Robert quoted from my notes of the letter: "*The man who brought him the money to get him out of Clichy is the successful candidate for Campo de los Angeles.*" The bargain was concluded that very day, and the triumphant result telegraphed to Dorrisson. Then Robert and I drove about Paris for a while, and dined in a wonderful room, so full of velvet and flowers, and gilding and looking-glasses, that I could hardly eat my dinner for bewilderment. It was on that occasion that we sketched out the scheme of a future visit to Paris; and I am afraid we were as much pleased and amused as a pair of naughty children at the escapade I had effected, and the little secret he and I and my cousin, Mrs Eccles, possessed in common. He put me into the train, and we parted quite gaily, laughing at the idea of my having made a journey which would have been talked about for a month at Clapham, with perfect ease. He did not mean to lose sight of Mr Disney until the final signing and sealing had been done. His last words to me were: "I wonder if our dear old house at Hampstead is to be had?" And then I knew that Robert thought the turn in the long lane of our troubles had been reached, and this 'little bit of a venture' was to be the broad way out of them.

When I made my appearance at Clapham I was very coldly received, and my conciliatory attempts were received with a long series of sniffs. I was not afraid of questions; Mrs Eccles was a person concerning whom my mother-in-law would not condescend even to be curious.

Robert came home a few days after, and called on Mr Hackett within a few hours of his return. My five hundred pounds were safely lodged in his cautious keeping again; and I suppose Robert made a satisfactory apology for me, as, when I next saw Mr John Hackett, he told me he had believed me to be a much more foolish woman than I had turned out to be, and he congratulated Robert on having made a less fatal blunder in his marriage than almost any man of his acquaintance.

Campo de los Angeles was a brilliant success, and did prove to be the turning-point in our fortunes. 'The very clever way in which Robert managed a critical and difficult affair for Mr Dorri-son, and the confidential and profitable relations resulting therefrom,' is a favourite theme with my mother-in-law, who likes us almost as well as she likes John and Mrs John, now that we have a finer house than Acanthus Lodge, and Heron and Shaw are no longer 'rising' young men, but in an assured and prosperous position. She is not, however, altogether inconsistent; she still declares, on occasion, that she does not 'hold with' speculations; though in that mine affair, somewhere in America, a place with a name which she would not pronounce if she could, regarding it as Spanish and impious, Robert had certainly made a Capital Hit.

THE CLOUD-MOUNTAINS.

WHEN the day was slowly fading,
And the storm was hushed to rest,
I marked a lofty mountain chain
Against the glowing west.

High towered its mighty summits,
Half bathed in azure mist;
Its sides were clad with dazzling snow,
Its peaks by sunlight kissed;

And at its feet there slumbered
The southern English scene—
The violet-scented hedgerows,
The meadow's emerald sheen.

But by the Scottish blood that beats
Within my alien breast,
Ne'er rose behind so tame a scene
So fair a mountain crest;

And as with yearning eyes I gazed
On each enhaloed height,
The budding English woodland
All faded from my sight.

The mountain sky was o'er my head,
Aflame with sunset glare;
And with wild joy I drank again
The misty mountain air;

And where the sunny slope had smiled,
There frowned the rugged steep;
And where the rivulet had gleamed,
I saw the cascade leap;

And dearer than the violet breath
In dewy English vale,
The sweet familiar heather-scent
Was borne upon the gale;

And gladsome, to my Scottish ears,
As mother's lullaby,
I heard the music of the hills,
The torrent's melody;

And high above the foaming flood,
Beyond the heath-clad plain,
Still rose against the western sky
The same fair mountain chain.

Fair as the golden dreams that come
With morning's earliest ray,
The vision shone, and then as swift,
Alas! it passed away.

Paler and fainter to my eyes,
The mighty mountains grew,
Till, mingling with the air itself,
They faded into blue.

And with them faded, too, the spell
That bound me heart and brain;
The deep ravine was gone—I saw
The southern fields again.

O say not it was but a cloud,
Reared by the storm-wind's art;
It was a vision sent in love,
To cheer my drooping heart.

For lighter far, since that bright eve,
The days have gone and come,
For that sweet glimpse, bestowed by Heaven,
Of beauty and of home.

The Publishers of CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL beg to direct the attention of CONTRIBUTORS to the following notice: 1st. All communications should be addressed to the 'Editor, 47 Paternoster Row, London.'

2d. To insure the return of papers that may prove ineligible, postage-stamps should in every case accompany them.

3d. All MSS. should bear the author's full CHRISTIAN name, surname, and address, legibly written.

4th. MSS. should be written on one side of the leaf only.

Unless Contributors comply with the above rules, the Editor cannot undertake to return rejected papers.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by all Booksellers.